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ABSTRACT

Public schools are often faced, when engaged in the task of developing annual goals, with the necessity of soliciting public input. To gather reliable input from the school community has been haphazard and uneven. Consolidated High School District 230 (Palos Hills, Illinois) employed the Public Opinion Laboratory, a professional survey firm, to provide efficient, cost effective, and reliable data indicating public opinion about a wide variety of issues affecting its schools. The purpose of this activity was to have the various elements of the school community--parents, students, teachers, administrators, and general citizens--evaluate their schools and identify attainable targets for improvement. This paper presents the results of the telephone survey conducted to obtain parent attitudes on the length of the school day and year, graduation requirements, weighted grades, merit pay, and spending on education. Parents also gave grade ratings to 12 school services and programs. The information has proven a valuable tool in strategic planning for the school district. Appendices (more than one-half of the document) contain: (1) the Annual Goals Advisory Committee's purposes and activities; (2) the telephone survey parent interview questions; and (3) several project memos. (DWH)

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PARENTAL EVALUATION OF A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT: THE PRODUCT AND THE PROCESS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April, 1985.

The literature of school leadership is replete with the charge that those in leadership roles set goals which are based on high, but attainable expectations. Furthermore, schools are encouraged to build upon those things which they do well and improve those areas in which performance is less than acceptable. Consolidated High School District 230, a three secondary school system serving approximately 6,000 students, like many other school systems across this nation, engaged in the development of annual goals. The purpose of this activity was to have the many elements of the school community: parents, students, teachers, administrators and general citizens evaluate their schools and point to attainable targets for improvement.

For years a number of strategies had been used in District 230 in an attempt to activate community interest in the process, as well as broaden community participation. Home-grown telephone surveys, community open houses, graduate follow-up surveys, newsletters and a variety of other methods had been attempted. Each had certain advantages and did render some information concerning the community's evaluation of their schools. These results, however, were uneven, sporadic in nature, and one was always left with the lurking suspicion that while some goals or improvement targets may have been identified, they were not the concerns of the community at large, but rather a vocal, organized minority.

In April, 1984, the Board of Education adopted a structured procedure for establishing annual goals (see appendix A). This process would have at its center a one-week intensive study of the school system by students, parents, teachers and administrators. At the conclusion of that one-week period, a limited number of goals would be presented to the Board of Education. These goals would then be considered by the Board for adoption.

In order for this process to be meaningful, the goal-planning group needed to have access to information about the schools beyond their own perceptions and opinions. While a number of documents, such as North Central Evaluations, graduate follow-up surveys and miscellaneous opinionnaires were available, no baseline data representing the feelings and beliefs of our community was available. Thus, the idea for a scientifically conducted survey of our community was born.

A planning committee of the Board of Education and the Administration investigated a number of options which might serve our purposes. In the recent past (six years prior) the school district had conducted a hybrid version of the Gallup Poll of Public Opinion on Education. This was carried out by parent volunteers. While such a strategy had certain "plusses" (cost, community participation), it also had various "minuses" (time, facilities, training, biases). A local community college which had data entry facilities, as well as available statistical packages, was also considered. This option was also reject (time, training, report writing). A third option, which we eventually adopted, was to employ a professional surveying service (see appendix B).

The advantages of this choice far outweighted the disadvantages. The survey would be conducted in a ten day period by phone. The preliminary results would be available one week later. A final, customized report would be available in six weeks. Training costs, interviewer biases and a variety of other disadvantages associated with different survey techniques would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Finally, schools, which operate with limited public funding, must be more cautious than most that those funds are spent wisely. It was the conclusion of our analysis that the professional survey method would be at least as cost effective as other options available and would render a product of superior usefulness.

For our purposes the Public Opinion Laboratory at Northern Illinois University was retained. The Laboratory worked through a number of planning sessions with the Administration and Board to explore the purposes, parameters, and potential uses of the survey. What had originally been conceived as a document of use only to an annual goals committee was now broadened to a survey which would reveal public sentiment on a wider spectrum: demographics, knowledge and evaluation of program, program preferences, school governance and attitudes on school issues (see appendix C).

In this planning stage a critical decision was also made about the populations to be surveyed. While some consideration had been given to surveying a representative sample of the school public-at-large, a final decision was made to survey only parents of the students currently in school and of recent (within two years) graduates. This choice was based on a number of factors. Since the survey was to be heavily involved in perceptions of programs, it was felt that those not familiar with the schools would be at a disadvantage in evaluating them. Additionally, the public at-large may be responding to education in general, rather than to the schools in our district.

A system was developed by the Public Opinion Laboratory for randomizing the parent population to ensure their representativeness and the process was begun. Professional interviewers sitting at data entry terminals conducted the survey (see appendix D) and entered the data. Each interview took approximately twenty minutes and, as has been previously noted, the survey was completed within ten days.

The results of the survey were then made available to the Board of Education, the Annual Goals Committee and the community at-large. Some of the findings have shaped our thinking or have caused us to rethink a number of issues.

Longer School Day

While the National Commission on Excellence in Education in its report, A Nation at Risk, recommended both a longer school day, as well as longer school year, parents within our school district did not endorse either concept (see Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 1

Length of School Day in District 230

	Per Cent
Total	
Too long	3%
About right	90
Too short	7
Stagg	
Too long	4
About right	91
Too short	5
Sandburg	
Too long	1
About right	96
Too short	2
Andrew	
Too long	3
About right	83
Too short	14
Current	
Too long	2
About right	90
Too short	7
Alumnus	
Too long	3
About right	90
Too short	7
In Honors	
Too long	1
About right	91
Too short	9
Not in Honors	
Too long	3
About right	90
Too short	7

TABLE 2

Length of School Year in District 230

	Per Cent
Total	
Too long	2%
About right	80
Too short	18
Stagg	
Too long	4
About right	84
Too short	13
Sandburg	
Too long	0
About right	84
Too short	16
Andrew	
Too long	2
About right	74
Too short	24
Current	
Too long	3
About right	80
Too short	17
Alumnus	
Too long	0
About rignt	80
Too short	20
In Honors	
Too long	3
About right	81
Too short	16
Not in Honors	
Too long	3
About right	90
Too short	7

Graduation Requirements

When asked if present mathematics and science requirements in the high schools were too much, about right, not enough or conditional (see Table 3), a sizeable percentage of the parents favored increased course requirements in these subjects.

TABLE 3

Course Requirements

School	English	Math & Science	Social Studies	Physical Educ.	Health Educ.	Consumer Educ.
Total	499	499	497	500	492	494
Too much	7%	0%	7%	12%	4%	4%
About right	69	46	74	74	64	63
Not enough	6	37	8	0	27	27
Conditional	17	16	11	13	5	6
Stagg	166	166	165	167	161	165
Too much	8%	1%	7%	13%	4%	2%
About right	65	52	72	71	65	69
Not enough	5	32	9	1	27	24
Conditional	22	16	13	15	5	4
Sandburg	167	167	166	167	165	165
Too much	7%	0%	5%	10%	2%	4%
About right	74	46	82	78	62	62
Not enough	5	37	6	0	30	26
Conditional	13	17	7	11	6	8
Andrew	166	166	166	166	166	164
Too much	7%	0%	8%	14%	5%	6%
About right	69	42	69	72	66	59
Not enough	9	43	8	0	25	31
Conditional	16	16	14	14	4	4

When parents were asked a similar question about computer coursework, an overwhelming number favored increasing study in this area (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

Computer Course Requirements

	All students	College bound and Technical only
Total	79%	17%
Stagg	79	15
Sandburg	78	16
Andrew	81	19
Current	81	17
Alumnus	75	18
In Honors	83	17
Not in Honors	78	17

At least partially as a result of these findings, a goal was adopted by the school district to investigate the present graduation requirements in mathematics, science and computer science. This study has been completed and a final report awaits presentation to the Board of Education (see appendix E).

Weighted Grades

The question of adding additional value to the grade point average and class rank of students successfully completing coursework of increased academic rigor has been hotly debated in school circles for a number of decades. Our district had had some experience with this system but was interested in

determining if it received parental endorsement. When parents were asked their views on the subject, over two-thirds of the respondents favored implementation of such a system (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

Grade Point Average and Class Standing Should be Weighted

	Per Cent
Total	67%
Stagg	64
Sandburg	71
Andrew	67
Current	64
Alumnus	76
In Honors	77
Not Honors	63

As with the results of the analysis of parental preferences for coursework, these results led, in part, to the formulation of a district goal to study implementation of a weighted grades system. Such a study has been completed and will be implemented in the 1985-86 school year (see appendix F).

We cite these examples as instances where the data collected from the community was used to affect school policy. We have by no means commented upon the entire survey which was conducted (see Tables 6 - 14), nor do we mean to suggest that all of the information generated by the survey has led to action by the Board of Education and the Administration. We do, however, believe that a thorough, properly conducted survey of public opinion about schools can be a valuable strategic planning tool for school leaders. While this is only one of many sources

of input which come to bear in determining the goals and directions for the schools, it has proven a valuable source of information in the strategic planning which occurs in our school district.

TABLE 6

Marital Status of Parent

School	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	N
Total	85%	4%	9%	2%	501
Stagg	81	4	13	2	167
Sandburg	85	4	9	2	167
Andrew	89	3	5	2	167
Current Parent	84	3	10	3	375
Alumni Parent	88	5	6	2	126
In Honors	87	1	10	1	141
Not in Honors	84	4	9	3	360

TABLE 7

Average Number of Children

	Average
Total	3.32
Stagg	3.23
Sandburg	3.42
Andrew	3.30
Curr. Parent	3.19
Alum. Parent	3.70
In Honors	3.30
Not In Honors	3.32

TABLE 8

Parental Ratings of Programs

School	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Total	490	484	488	450	405	425	477	452	480	476	448	471
A	42%	24%	24%	21%	36%	13%	51%	40%	24%	35%	39%	45%
B	41	46	28	24	38	30	34	35	38	37	38	34
C	15	25	32	36	24	43	12	18	28	19	17	14
D	1	3	9	12	2	9	2	4	5	3	3	4
F	1	2	7	7	2	6	2	3	5	5	3	3
Stagg	160	159	159	151	137	141	153	144	159	158	146	148
A	36%	20%	29%	26%	34%	12%	44%	33%	20%	27%	36%	47%
B	43	48	25	21	39	30	40	44	34	36	37	31
C	19	25	30	32	24	39	14	19	32	27	23	16
D	1	4	9	14	1	11	1	2	8	6	1	4
F	1	3	6	7	2	9	1	2	7	4	3	3
Sandburg	167	164	164	148	134	149	161	152	160	158	153	162
A	46%	26%	25%	20%	43%	9%	55%	44%	23%	35%	44%	47%
B	40	43	27	24	33	28	31	30	43	40	37	35
C	14	26	33	38	21	47	9	20	29	18	12	11
D	1	3	8	12	2	10	3	3	3	3	3	4
F	0	1	7	5	2	5	2	3	3	4	3	3
Andrew	163	161	165	151	134	135	163	156	161	160	149	161
A	44%	27%	17%	16%	29%	16%	53%	43%	30%	43%	36%	43%
B	42	47	31	26	41	31	31	33	38	36	40	35
C	11	23	33	39	25	43	13	16	23	14	17	15
D	1	1	11	10	4	4	1	5	3	2	3	3
F	2	3	9	9	1	5	1	3	6	6	3	4

Legend:
A = overall quality of academic program
B = quality of teaching
C = quality of counseling and advising about courses
D = quality of counseling and advising about careers
E = quality of library services
F = quality of food service
G = availability of extracurricular programs
H = supervision of extracurricular programs
I = quality of student behavior and discipline
J = fairness of enforcement of rules
K = leadership and direction of the principal
L = safety and convenience of school busing

TABLE 9

Rating of School Board

	A	B	C	D	F
Total	19%	41%	25%	2%	1%
Stagg	16	42	25	1	1
Sandburg	20	44	25	2	2
Andrew	20	37	26	3	2
Current	20	48	29	2	1
Alumnus	25	41	29	2	3
In Honors	23	51	22	4	1
Not in Honors	20	45	32	2	2

TABLE 10

Name of Superintendent

	Know name of Superintendent	Able to give correct name
Total	28%	19%
Stagg	22	13
Sandburg	33	20
Andrew	31	23
Current	27	31
Alumnus	33	39
In Honors	40	23
Not Honors	24	40

TABLE 11

Regularly Read Local Newspapers *

Paper read	Stagg	Sandburg	Andrew	Total
Economist	48%	44%	59%	51%
Orland Herald	0	8	7	5
Reporter	20	7	1	9
Star Herald	2	18	45	22
Palos Regional	5	17	0	7
Suburban Times	4	4	4	4
Suburban Tribune	2	2	5	3
Penny Saver	3	1	2	2
Marketeer	4	1	0	2
Citizens	9	0	0	3

* Totals may exceed 100% since respondents could name up to 2 newspapers.

TABLE 12

Regularly Read Local Newspapers *

	Student Status		Honors	
	Current	Alumnus	Yes	No
Economist	51%	48%	54%	49%
Orland Herald	5	4	6	4
Reporter	8	12	9	9
Star Herald	21	22	24	21
Palos Regional	6	10	4	6
Suburban Times	4	6	4	4
Suburban Tribune	3	5	3	3
Penny Saver	2	3	2	2
Marketeer	1	3	1	2
Citizens	3	3	1	4

* Totals may exceed 100% since respondents could name up to 2 newspapers.

TABLE 13

Effect of Merit Pay on Teaching

School	Per Cent	N
Total		475
Improve teaching	64%	
No difference	22	
Negative effect	14	
Stagg		157
Improve teaching	56	
No difference	27	
Negative effect	17	
Sandburg		157
Improve teaching	67	
No difference	18	
Negative effect	15	
Andrew		161
Improve teaching	69	
No difference	21	
Negative effect	10	
Current		375
Improve teaching	62	
No difference	22	
Negative effect	16	
Alumnus		126
Improve teaching	70	
No difference	21	
Negative effect	9	
In Honors Program		141
Improve teaching	62	
No difference	24	
Negative effect	14	
Not in Honors		360
Improve teaching	65	
No difference	21	
Negative effect	14	

TABLE 14

Current Level of Spending for Elementary and Secondary Education in Illinois

School	Per Cent	N
Total		461
Too much	7%	
About right	44	
Too little	48	
Stagg		152
Too much	7	
About right	40	
Too little	53	
Sandburg		156
Too much	6	
About right	48	
Too little	46	
Andrew		153
Too much	9	
About right	45	
Too little	46	
Current		375
Too much	6	
About right	44	
Too little	50	
Alumnus		126
Too much	13	
About right	44	
Too little	44	
In Honors Program		141
Too much	5	
About right	36	
Too little	58	
Not in Honors		360
Too much	8	
About right	47	
Too little	44	

APPENDIX A

Annual Goals Advisory Committee

PURPOSE:

In order to insure community input in the identification and attainment of annual goals in Consolidated High School District 230, an Annual Goals Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives of the many constituencies of this educational community will be formed. It will be the primary function of this committee to review all potential goals suggested by students, staff, and citizens and to prioritize these goals. Furthermore, for each goal identified as a priority, the Committee will develop a rationale and a possible action plan for attaining the goal. The Committee is advisory in nature and will offer its recommendations to the Board of Education for possible adoption.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

The membership of the Annual Goals Advisory Committee will consist of three representatives of the student body. One student will be selected by the student council of each high school to serve on the Committee. A teacher from each high school recommeded by the District 230 Teachers' Association Executive Board will also serve on the Committee. Each Parent Association will nominate a representative from each high school. An administrator from each high school will serve on the Committee. Finally, one District-level administrator will sit as an ex-officio member of the Committee. The Superintendent will select a chairperson for the Committee. The membership of the Committee will consist of twelve official members and one ex-officio member.

Names of all Committee members will be submitted to the Superintendent by

PROCESS:

Prior to the conclusion of the academic year, suggestions will be requested from the students, staff, and community for ways to improve the services offered by Consolidated High School District 230. The Annual Goals Advisory Committee will review each suggestion offered. Suggestions will then be categorized into various areas of school service (instructional program, pupil personnel services, school community relations, physical plant, etc.) Following this, each suggestion will be evaluated as to importance, impact, and feasibility.

The Committee will then be charged to select seven goals which they believe should serve as priorities in the coming school year. For each goal which the Committee has prioritized, a rationale and action plan for implementation will be established.

The work of the Committee will be carried out during the week of June 25, 1984. At the conclusion of that week the Committee through its chairperson, will present to the Superintendent its priorities, rationales, and action plans for further consideration by the Administration and Board of Education.

Following the Committee work, each goal will be reviewed and analyzed by the Administration and Board. The Board of Education will then adopt a number of goals to serve as priorities in the next academic year. Each of these goals will be studied by a committee of the Board or another group designated by the Board. Each of these committees or group will later report to the Board of Education on the progress made in attaining the stated goal.

Annual Goals Advisory Committee

MAY, 1984	1. Input is solicited from students, parents, staff, and citizens. 2. Committee member recommendations are received by the Superintendent. 3. Committee Chairperson is selected.
JUNE, 1984	1. Chairperson carries out organizational tasks prior to meeting. 2. Committee meets, conducts process of identification, analysis and prioritization. 3. Committee submits seven tentative goals, rationales and action plans to Superintendent for eventual submission to the Board of Education.
JULY, 1984	1. Administration analyzes the report of the Goals Committee. 2. Analysis is made by the Administration and the Board of Education of the results of the school survey.
AUGUST, 1984	1. Goals are submitted to the Board of Education for discussion. 2. Board of Education accepts, amends, rejects, or adds to tentative goals list at a Study Session. 3. Goals are prepared for final approval at next Board meeting.
SEPTEMBER, 1984	1. Annual Goals are approved by the Board of Education. 2. Approved Goals are published and made available to all elements of school community. 3. Notification to Goals Committee of approved goals and thanks.
OCTOBER, 1984	1. Establish calendar to reports/responsibilities on Goal attainment.
OCTOBER, 1984 to APRIL, 1985	1. Reports on progress in achieving goals are submitted to the Board of Education.
MAY, 1985	1. A final Annual Goals report is submitted to the Board of Education by the Superintendent. 2. Begin the process for the next year's Annual Goals.

Responsibilities of the Annual Goals Advisory Committee

The responsibility of the Annual Goals Advisory Committee is to examine all recommendations for improvement suggested by the school community and to identify those goals whose significance require their attainment become a District priority. It is the Committee's charge to advise the Board, recognizing that final responsibility and authority for establishing District goals lies with the Board of Education.

For each of the seven identified goals the Committee will:

1) establish a goals statement
The goals statement will direct an examination, analysis or apprisal of something. The goal statement does not include intended results.

2) establish a rationale or need for the goal
The rationale should present compelling reasons why the achievement of the goal is a stated priority for the District in the coming school year.

3) develop an action plan for goal attainment
The Committee will develop time lines for activities to occur, indicate appropriate areas to be examined in order to achieve the goal, and suggest appropriate data to be analyzed in the process.

The work of the Annual Goals Advisory Committee brings together the collective knowledge, perspectives and aspirations of the school community as that community strives to achieve the best school system possible. In such a setting of cooperative exchange of ideas between students, parents, teachers and administrators the development of meaningful goals which address the needs of the entire school community is possible.

APPENDIX B

CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 230

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Barnes

FROM: John F. Murphy

SUBJECT: Parent Survey

DATE: May 7, 1984

As a result of the Survey Committee's deliberation, as well as the group's meeting with Dr. John Miller of the Public Opinion Laboratory, it is our belief that our survey should be a parent survey of present, and past students of the District, as well as a representative sampling of parents of students presently in junior high school. This conclusion is based on the belief that these groups possess the interest and knowledge to supply meaningful information about the many services offered by the District.

Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the survey be conducted by telephone. The sample size will consist of approximately 400 randomly selected parents.

As the Committee deliberated the method for designing the instruments, collecting the data, analyzing the data, and effectively designing the report of data a number of considerations were warranted. As a result, I have prepared the following comparisons concerning the costs, human resource requirements, and timelines for a survey conducted by District 230 staff/ volunteers as opposed to the Public Opinion Laboratory.

1. A self-survey will require the following personnel. One person will be required to oversee the entire process from beginning to end. Depending on the salary of that individual, the cost per-hour could amount to at least several hundred dollars if not several thousand. ($2,000.00)

2. A minimum of one secretary will be required on an as-needed basis to prepare a variety of documents from communiques to the actual interview protocols. Minimally seventy-five hours will be required at an average of five dollars per hour. ($375.00)

3. Phones will have to be arranged under present conditions or a bank of telephones will have to be established at some centrally supervisable location. If current phones are used, this presents no cost. If other arrangements are made, the cost of a telephone hook-up would be approximately sixty-five dollars per unit. This could amount to two - four hundred dollars. ($200 - $400)

4. Telephone call charges will be insured. While this is not a major cost, these charges could run from one - two hundred dollars. ($100 - $200)

5. Photocopying of numerous required materials and the purchase of materials. Using the Rosemount, Minnesota information, this would cost approximately five hundred dollars. ($500)

6. Data processing costs are more difficult to develop. While the statistical packages (S.P.S.S. and S.A.S.) sufficient to generate a variety of data analyses are present on the Moraine Valley Community College system, that data will have to be entered by secretarial help. Assuming 400 respondents requiring ten minutes to enter each response, this would amount to sixty-six hours of work. At an average secretarial salary of five dollars per hour, this would require three hundred thirty dollars. ($330)

7. The telephone survey staff will have to be identified, trained, and supervised. Unless this phase of the process is carried out meticulously, the survey results are jeopardized.

   The time-line for conducting a self-survey would not allow this to be done before the end of the school year. Since surveying the parents in the summer is less than desirable, the survey would be delayed until early fall. Assuming the time-line of the Rosemont, Minnesota model to be valid, the self-survey process required five and one-half months. The Public Opinion Laboratory process will require six - eight weeks total.

9. Report of data will be an additional responsibility with a self-survey. Once the data has been analyzed, the data report will have to be reconfigured to determine those portions useful and then reports will have to be designed and generated. The Public Opinion Laboratory will produce a preliminary report of data three - four days after completion of the survey. Total, comprehensive data reports will be available in two - three weeks after completion of the survey.

In conculsion, if the intent of the survey is to produce "hard" data upon which far-reaching decisions will be made, then the services of a professional organization may be warranted. While the process of community involvement and participation may yield some important support benefits, the importance of this undertaking would seem to suggest that this be carried out by individuals who do this type of work regularly and who will guarantee the quality of their product.

bk

APPENDIX c

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARENTS	3
3.	PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND EVALUATION OF CURRENT PROGRAMS	11
4.	PARENTAL PROGRAM PREFERENCES	25
5.	PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	39
6.	ATTITUDES ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES	48
7.	SOME CONCLUSIONS	54

Appendix		Page
A.	PARENT INTERVIEW	57
B.	PARENTS SUGGESTIONS FOR BOARD ACTIONS	73

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Marital Status of Parent	3
2.	Highest Educational Level of Parent	4
3.	Highest Educational Level of Parent	5
4.	Employment Status of Parent	5
5.	Employment Status of Parent	6
6.	Occupation of Parent	7
7.	Occupation of Parent	8
8.	Average Number of Children	9
9.	Profile of High School Student	10
10.	Level of Interest in and Information about District 230 Schools	12
11.	Parental Ratings of Programs	13
12.	Parental Ratings of Programs	15
13.	Strongest Academic Areas	18
14.	Strongest Academic Areas	19
15.	Weakest Academic Areas	20
16.	Weakest Academic Areas	21
17.	Hours of Homework Nightly	22
18.	Rating of Current Level of Homework	23
19.	Average Monthly Use of Public Library	24
20.	Length of School Day in District 230	26
21.	Length of School Year in District 230	27

22. Should Have Longer School Year or Voluntary Summer School . . 29

23. Course Requirements 30

24. Course Requirements 31

25. Foreign Language Course Requirements 32

26. Science Course Requirements 32

27. Computer Course Requirements 33

28. Percent Agreeing that Driver Education is a Good Subject to Offer 34

29. Per Cent Agreeing That Students Should NOT be Grouped by Ability 34

30. Grade Point Average and Class Standing Should be Weighted . . 35

31. Learning Aids Available in Home 36

32. Home Computer with More Than 48K 37

33. Type of Home Computer 37

34. Type of Home Computer 38

35. Average Number of Board Meetings Attended in Past Two Years 40

36. School Board Information 41

37. Rating of School Board 42

38. Name of Superintendent 42

39. Rating of Superintendent 43

40. Sources of Information About District 230 * 44

41. Percent Reading Local Paper Regularly 45

42. Regularly Read Local Newspapers * 46

43. Regularly Read Local Newspapers * 46

44. Effect of Merit Pay on Teaching 49

45. Current Level of Spending for Elementary and Secondary Education in Illinois 51

46. Increase State Income Tax and Reduce Property Tax for Education 52

47. Use Public Taxes to Support Private School Textbook Purchases and Busing 53

APPENDIX D

PARENT INTERVIEW

District 230 Parent Interview Schedule

May 1984

Hello, this is _____ _____ and I'm calling from the Public Opinion Laboratory at Northern Illinois University. We are conducting a survey of parents in High School District 230. The Board of Education wants to know how you would evaluate the current programs in District 230 and what kinds of program changes you would like. The Board will be using the results of this survey in their planning so it is important for us to talk to you. All of your answers will be treated in confidence and District 230 will not be able to identify your individual answers. The interview will take about 15 minutes, okay?

Let me start by asking a few questions about your children.

First, how many children do you have?

What are their ages, from oldest to youngest?

____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Now, let me ask you about the _____-year-old.

(REPEAT FOR EACH CHILD)

Is that a boy or a girl?

What grade or year is he/she in?

What school does he/she attend?

Does he/she participate in any "gifted" or "honors" programs?

Does he/she use any special education services?

When he/she finishes high school, do you think he/she will : get a job (1), join the armed services (2), go to a community college (3), go to a senior college (4), or what (5 = else)?

Thinking to the future, what is the highest level of education that you expect this student to complete in his/her lifetime?

Now, let me ask you about your interest in the high school programs in District 230. Would you say that you are

(1) very interested

(2) moderately interested, or

(3) not very interested

in the high school programs of District 230?

How well informed are you about the programs and high schools in District 230? Would you say that you are

(1) very well informed

(2) moderately well informed, or

(3) not very well informed

about the high school programs in District 230?

Now, let me ask you to think about the programs at (Andrew/Sandburg/ Stagg) High School and to grade several major facets of that program. If you think that a program is excellent, give it a grade of "A". If you think that a program is average, give it a grade of "C". If a program is inadequate or unsatisfactory, give it a grade of "F". You can use all five letter grades -- A,B,C,D, and F.

First, what grade would you give to the overall quality of the academic program at _____High School?

Next, what grade would you give to the quality of teaching at _____High School?

What grade would you give to the quality of counseling and advising about courses at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the quality of counseling and advising about careers at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the quality of library services at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the quality of the food service at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the availability of extracurricular programs at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the supervision of extracurricular programs at _____ High School?

What grade would you give to the quality of student behavior and discipline at _____ High School?

What grade would you give the fairness of the enforcement of rules at _____ High School?

What grade would you give the leadership and direction of the Principal at _____ High School?

What grade would you give the safety and convenience of school busing in District 230?

Now, let me ask you a few questions about the curriculum at _____ High School. _____ High School requires ALL students to complete four years of English. Would you say this is:

(1) too much
(2) about right
(3) not enough
(4) too much for some students, not enough for others

District 230 requires ALL students to complete a total of two years of math and science. Would you say this is:

(1) too much
(2) about right
(3) not enough
(4) too much for some students, not enough for others

ALL District 230 students are required to take two years of social

studies. Would you say this is:

(1) too much

(2) about right

(3) not enough

(4) too much for some students,
not enough for others

ALL District 230 students must take four years of physical

___

education. Would you say this is:

(1) too much

(2) about right

(3) not enough

(4) too much for some students,
not enough for others

ALL District 230 students must take one-half year of health

___

education. Would you say this is:

(1) too much

(2) about right

(3) not enough

(4) too much for some students,
not enough for others

ALL District 230 students must take one-half year of consumer

___

education. Would you say this is:

(1) too much

(2) about right

(3) not enough

(4) too much for some students,
not enough for others

District 230 schools must offer Driver Education to students who

____

wish to take it. Would you say this is:

(1) a good idea

(2) not necessary

Should District 230 require students to complete a course about

_____

computers?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Should all students take a basic computer course, or should computer studies be required only for students who are college-bound or planning for technological careers?

(1) all

(2) college-bound and technical

Should District 230 require students to study a foreign language?

_____

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Should all students be required to take a foreign language, or should foreign language be a required subject only for college-bound students?

(1) all

(2) college-bound

Should District 230 increase its graduation requirement in science from one year to two years?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Should all students be required to take two years of science, or should this requirement apply only to college-bound students?

(1) all

(2) college-bound

Thinking about all of the academic subjects offered in _____ High School, what do you think is the strongest -- that is, highest quality -- area? What would you say is the second strongest area?

1. _____

2. _____

What would you say is the weakest -- or lowest quality -- academic

area at _____ High School? What would be the second weakest area?

1. _____

2. _____

Some recent national reports on education recommend that students should NOT be grouped in classes according to ability. The idea is to design all classes so they can be open to ALL students, regardless of ability (no honors sections, etc.) Do you:

(1) agree this is a good idea?

(2) disagree with this idea?

Some recent national reports say students would achieve more if the school day were longer. The school day in District 230 consists of seven 55-minute periods, one of which is devoted to homeroom/lunch. Students also have the option of taking an extra course before or after school (zero-hour or eighth hour courses). Is the District 230 school day:

(1) too long

(2) about right, or

(3) too short?

Another recommendation is that the school year be lengthened. Do you think that the current school year is:

(1) too long

(2) about right, or

(3) too short?

(IF TOO SHORT:) Do you think that all students should have a longer school year, or would it be all right to have a summer school for those students and parents who want a longer school year?

(1) all

(2) voluntary

Some recent national reports on education recommend that teachers be offered incentive pay (or "merit pay") as a reward for excellent performance. Would this:

(1) improve teaching

(2) have a negative effect on teacher performance

(3) make no difference

Do you think that the amount of money spent for elementary and high school education in Illinois is too much, about right, or too little?

(1) too much

(2) about right

(3) too little

Some people have proposed that elementary and high school education should be paid for by increasing the state income tax and reducing property taxes. Would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose this proposal?

(1) strongly favor

(2) favor

(3) oppose

(4) strongly oppose

In calculating a student's grade point average and class standing, should students in honors and advanced placement courses receive extra weight in the calculation?

(1) yes

(2) no

Should public school tax dollars be used to support private schools through textbook purchases and busing?

(1) yes

(2) no

Now, let me turn to some issues about student behavior and participation in extracurricular programs and activities. I want to read you a short list of student activities at _____ High School. For each one, please tell me if your current _____ High School student has participated in that activity. OK?

(1) Athletics?

(IF YES:) How many sports?

(2) High school drama club or school plays?

(3) Band or orchestra?

(4) Choral music?

(5) National Honor Society?

(6) Debate or forensics?

(7) School paper, yearbook, or literary magazine?

(8) Student government?

(9) Other clubs?

Now, let me ask you about homework. How many hours does your high school student spend on homework on a typical night?
Would you say that the current level of homework is too high, about right, or too low?

(1) too high

(2) about right

(3) too low

Traditionally, homework and related assignments have used only textbooks and printed materials. We are interested in the kinds of equipment that might be available to _____ High School students to use other learning materials.

Do you have a TV set?

(1) yes

(2) no

Do you have a VCR?

(1) yes

(2) no

Do you have a home computer?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) What kind?

Does it have 48K or more of storage?

Do you have a tape recorder?

(1) yes

(2) no

Do you have a record player?

(1) yes

(2) no

About how many times a month does your high school student use the public library?

During the last 2 years, have you attended any meetings of the District 230 Board of Education?

(1) yes

(2) no

Thinking back to last November, did you vote in the election for District 230 school board members?

(1) yes

(2) no

Let me ask you about the current board for District 230. Do you know the names of any of the current board members?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Do you feel that you know any board members well enough to call and talk to them on an issue of concern to you?

(1) yes

(2) no

Thinking in grade card terms again, what grade would you give the Board of District 230 for the job they're doing?

Do you know the name of the Superintendent of District 230?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Can you tell me that name?

_____

Thinking in grade card terms again, what grade would you give the Superintendent for the job he's doing?

Now, let me ask you to think about where you get your information about _____ High School and District 230.

(1) _____

(2) _____

Do you read a local paper regularly?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) Which ones?

(1) _____

(2) _____

The District 230 Board of Education is committed to excellence in education. Suppose for a moment that you were a member of the school board. What do you think could be done to improve our high schools?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, for statistical purposes, I need to ask you a few short questions about yourself:

Are you currently :

(1) married

(2) widowed

(3) divorced

(4) separated

(5) or have you never been married?

Did you ever get a high school diploma or GED?

(1) yes

(2) no

(IF YES:) What is your highest degree?

(1) high school

(2) associate

(3) bachelor's

(4) master's

(5) doctorate

(6) other professional

(For highest degree:) In what field was that degree?

Last week, were you working full-time, working part-time, going to school, or what?

(10) working full-time

(20) working part-time

(30) has job, but ill, on vacation or strike

(40) unemployed, laid-off, looking for work

(50) retired

(60) in school

(70) keeping house

(80) other

What kind of work do you (did you) normally do?

What was your job called? What do (did) you do in that job? What are (were) some of your main duties?

(IF MARRIED:) Last week, was your spouse working full-time, working part-time, going to school, or what?

(10) working full-time

(20) working part-time

(30) has job, but ill, on vacation or strike

(40) unemployed, laid-off, looking for work

(50) retired

(60) in school

(70) keeping house

(80) other

What kind of work does (did) he/she normally do?

What was his/her job called? What does (did) he/she do in that job?

What are (were) some of his/her main duties?

That's all the questions. Thanks very much for your time!

APPENDIX E

TO: Board of Education

FROM: The Central Curriculum Development Council

SUBJECT: Graduation Requirements Goal

DATE: March 29, 1985

The Board of Education has adopted as a goal for the 1984-85 academic year the following: Examine current graduation requirements in the areas of mathematics, science and computer education. In the examination, the importance of the ratio of elective classes (including traditional vocational education classes) and required classes must be considered. The Board has directed that the Central Curriculum Development Council conduct a study of this goal and report to the Board by March, 1985. What follows is the position of the Council.

The Central Curriculum Development Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the review of this important goal. Furthermore, the Council is pleased in the confidence which the Board has placed in it.

It is the Council's belief that the present two year mathematics requirement for all graduates beginning with the class of 1988 addresses the apparent desire for increased mathematics study for all District 230 graduates. At the time in which the goal was formulated by the Committee, the District required a combination of three years of study in both mathematics and science. The implementation of Public Act 83-1082 which went into effect in September, 1984, specifies that the second year of study in these subject areas be in mathematics.

The District is currently in conformity with the newly adopted State graduation requirement in science which also was the result of Public Act 83-1082. Prior to the enactment of that law, Illinois had no minimum science requirement. The Council does not, at this time recommend any change in this requirement. The Council does acknowledge and applaud the efforts which are presently underway to establish a minimum definition of scientific literacy and to ensure that students acquire this.

The entry-level requirements for Introduction to Computers, the beginning course in the computer science sequence, has been changed from sophomore year to freshman year. This change will allow greater accessibility to the computer science program and may address the concern of this goal.

The Council does not endorse the addition of a mandatory computer science/ literacy course for numerous reasons. The history of mandated "specialty courses" has not been a particularly bright one in Illinois education. State Boards and Legislatures have often reacted to temporary educational deficits by mandating a course for all students. Often the reason for the course passes out of existence, but the course remains. We fear that the implementation of a computer education course may have the same results. While we recognize that computer literacy is presently a topic causing great change, concern and even anxiety, we question the benefit of requiring a course whose subject matter is still undefined. We further question whether such a course might not be better suited at the elementary or junior high school levels. Finally, we believe that the nature of computers are changing so rapidly and so all-pervasive, that a course requirement may soon be antiquated or irrelevant.

We do support the notions that students should all be exposed to computer technology, be aware of the many functions of computers, and also be able to use computers should they desire to do so. This may result more appropriately through the integration of computers throughout our wide curriculum rather than requiring a narrowly defined course.

The goal as stated further states that the Council consider the ratio of elective to required courses in our deliberations. There are various forces beyond the control of District 230 which lead us to view increasing graduation requirements cautiously. First, the State has recently adopted Public Act 83-1082. This law has had the practical effect of increasing required subjects by one year. Secondly, the Illinois Board of Higher Education is considering the development of minimum course requirements for entry into state colleges and universities. These requirements (four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science three years of social studies, and two years of electives in foreign language music or art) added to the present mandates of health, driver education and consumer education would limit student access to electives to one and one-half credits within the eighteen credits required for graduation. While these entry standards will not be requirements for graduation, we believe that they may have that effect, at least informally.

Also, the Illinois State Board of Education is studying a plan to have student learning outcomes replace minimum course requirements as measures of student achievement. While this effort is somewhat unclear, it further adds to our caution in recommending changes at this time.

Governor Thompson has promised that he will make increasing demands upon public schools as the price for his support for increased funding levels. At this point, however, the nature of these demands is unclear.

Finally, the agenda of Ted Sanders, new State Superintendent of Schools, is yet to be unveiled. The beginning of a new term of office often is accompanied by changes. The exact qualities of these changes remain to be determined.

It is, then, against this shifting backdrop of uncertainty and change which we view graduation requirements in mathematics, science and computer education. We believe that until some of these proposals are resolved and their effects felt and analyzed, any increase or decrease in graduation requirements in these areas would be ill-advised.

bk

APPENDIX F

CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 230

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Central Curriculum Development Council

FROM: The Education Committee: Edith Andrew, Ron Barnes, Michael Coglianese, Beth Gierach, John Murphy, John Novosel, Chairperson

SUBJECT: Honors Point Recommendation

DATE: October 25, 1984

At the August 20, 1984, meeting the Board of Education adopted as one of its seven goals for the 1984-85 academic year the following: "Investigate the present concept of weighted grades while considering use thereof for district purposes, as well as out-of-district use." As a direct response to this adopted goal, the Education Committee has begun it study.

THE PROCESS:

The Committee met September 18, 1984, to begin its review of various past and current practices for assigning weighted grades both in District 230 and in a number of other districts. An extensive collection of documents and research on the topic was provided each committee member. In addition, the philosophical arguments for and against expanding the system beyond its present form were presented.

At its September 28, 1984, meeting the Committee continued its discussion for and against changing the present weighted grades system. At this meeting the Committee was able to reach unanimous agreement on the concept of extending the use of weighted grades to within the District. However, the Committee had not reached agreement on the best method of implementation.

At its October 17, 1984, meeting the Committee agreed upon a strategy for implementing a weighted grade system for use within the District, as well as without. Furthermore, the Committee began the development of a formal proposal which would eventually be presented to the Board of Education.

The Education Committee completed its recommendation November 2, 1984. The Administration will present the proposal to the Central Curriculum Development Council prior to eventual consideration by the Board of Education.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Education Committee recommends a single system of weighted grades for both in-District and out-of-District use beginning with the 1985-86 academic year. The Committee concurs with the previous District practice of granting an honors point for selected coursework in the core academic areas of mathematics, science, English, social studies, and foreign language. It is the Committee's belief that learning in these core areas is fundamental to the achievement of the District mission to develop life-long learners. For all students the new single grade point average and class rank will be based on the weighted grade formula which has been calculated in the past, but not used in-District. The single exception to this recommendation is the senior class of 1985-86. Since this is the single class to have entered the District when an honors point was not available in some form, the Committee recommends that for this class only, the unweighted grade system under which they entered the District be used in determining the top ten academic students in each school.

The Committee further recognizes that the meaningful implementation of this system will depend in great measure on the continuing efforts and commitment of the teaching staff, counselors, and administration and urges that all members of the school community work cohesively to make this recommendation effective.

RATIONALE:

1. Weighted grades are a recognition of the increased difficulty which is expected and achieved by students.

2. Weighted grades will encourage students to choose more challenging and appropriate coursework.

3. Weighted grades will aid District 230 students in attaining college admission, awards and scholarships.

4. Weighted grades will allow District 230 students to maintain equivalent academic status with students from districts using an honors point system.

5. There is widespread community support, even from parents of non-honors students, for the concept of weighted grades.

CONCERNS:

The Education Committee is aware that a number of concerns might attend the implementation of an expanded weighted grade system in the District. The concerns are noted and addressed.

1. Weighted grades are an indication of a student's desire for a reward which is external to learning for its own sake.

   Committee Response: While this may be true in some cases, rewards extrinsic to an act or achievement are commonplace in our society. Furthermore, for whatever motives, students will participate in a more rigorous and enriched experience.

2. Courses that receive an honors point may not be more difficult than others not receiving the honors point.

   Committee Response: All courses receiving an honors point will be regularly evaluated to maintain the integrity of the system. The continuing commitment of the teaching staff and administration will be required to ensure this.

3. Concern: A new grading policy may cause confusion and misunderstanding among students, parents, and staff members.

   Committee Response: Clear explanation of the grading policy should be continuous and thorough. Furthermore, the recommended grading system will be more easily explainable and understandable than that which is currently in place.

4. Concern: Some students who entered the school system under different grading standards will be disadvantaged by the implementation of a new system.

   Committee Response: Beginning with the 1985-86 academic year only one class will not have had the opportunity for some form of honors point in each of their years in the District: the senior class. For this class, and this class only, the unweighted grade calculation will be used in the determination of the top ten academic students. For all other purposes, a single weighted grade point average will be used for all students.

5. Concern: Implementation of an expanded honors point system will encourage elitism within the student body.

   Committee Response: Students, parents, and school personnel create a variety of elites based on looks, talents, wealth, athletic ability, or various other social factors. A grading system will not be the determinant of an elite.

HONORS POINT GUIDELINES:

A definition of Honors/Advanced Placement:

The course content of honors level and advanced placement courses will be both broader in scope and more intellectually rigorous than that found in other classes. Honors and advanced level courses will stress learning at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Honors and advanced level courses will stress analytical skills and critical thinking in addition to the mastery of fundamental materials.

1. Continuing with the 1985-86 academic school year District 230 will implement an honors point system in classes designated as honors and advanced placement. All classes receiving additional weighting will be denoted honors or advanced placement in their titles.

2. The method of weighting will consist of adding one additional grade point to grades received in the honors/advanced placement courses.

3. In order to receive additional weighting, students must achieve a grade of "C" or higher.

4. Cumulative grade point average and rank in class will be reported on the student's semester and end of the year report cards, as well as on transcripts.

5. A single grade point average and class rank will be reported on report cards and transcripts. This grade point average and class rank will apply for all in-District and out-of-District purposes. For the graduating class of 1986, an unweighted grading system will be used in the determination of the top ten academic students. This unweighted system will not be used for any other purposes and will not be used following the graduation of this class.

6. Only those courses in the following subject areas will be considered for weighted status: Mathematics, English, science, social studies, and foreign language.

7. Department chairmen and building principals will review annually all courses being recommended for additional weighting. This review will take place prior to beginning the registration process. At this time recommendations for additions or deletions in the list of courses receiving an honors point will be made.

8. In order to maintain the academic integrity of the courses receiving additional weighting, department chairmen request strict adherance to prerequisites and admission criteria. Students who do not meet the stated standards for course admission are strongly advised not to apply.

9. Following is a list of those courses recommended for additional weighting during the 1985-86 school year.

MATHEMATICS:	Honors Algebra Honors Geometry Honors Advanced Algebra Pre-Calculus (Honors)
ENGLISH:	Honors Freshman English Honors Sophomore English Honors Junior English Honors Senior English Honors American Studies (Two credit year-long course taught in conjunction with social studies.)
SOCIAL STUDIES:	Honors U. S. History Honors American Studies Honors World History Honors World Geography

SCIENCE:	Honors Physical Science Honors Biology Honors Physics Honors Chemistry
ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES:	Advanced Placement U. S. History Advanced Placement European History Advanced Placement Calculus Advanced Placement German III Advanced Placement German IV Advanced Placement Spanish III Advanced Placement Spanish IV Advanced Placement Chemistry Advanced Placement Biology Advanced Placement Physics Advanced Placement - Advanced Pascal

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